

World War II



Texas

4 Studies Weekly

OUR STATE

A World at War

Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was the home of America's largest naval base in the Pacific region in 1940. At this time, nearly every ship of the U.S. Pacific Fleet was docked at Ford Island in the harbor. At 7:55 a.m. on Dec. 7, 1941 in Pearl Harbor, hundreds of Japanese planes attacked American ships and aircraft. Immediately, alarms sounded all over Hawaii. A message went out, "Air raid on Pearl Harbor. This is not a drill."

Japanese fighter planes, torpedo bombers, and dive bombers took only one hour and 55 minutes to empty their bombs and bullets. Thousands of American sailors, soldiers, and marines were killed, as were many civilians working at the air and naval bases. More than 1,000 people were wounded.

In addition to the loss of life, there was loss and destruction of equipment at the bases. Several of the U.S.'s large battleships were sunk or severely damaged. Many smaller ships met the same fate. Hundreds of navy and army planes on the ground were damaged or destroyed. Many of the docks, repair facilities, hangars, and runways were damaged or destroyed. The devastation of the port facilities, the highways, and service connections kept rescue and recovery vehicles from aiding the wounded.

When word of the attack reached the United States mainland, panic, disbelief, and anger spread from coast to coast. Along the western coastal cities, people feared a direct attack of Japanese military from the sea. The event would propel the United States into WWII.

Many people questioned if the United should have seen the attack as a possibility before it happened. Since the island of Japan lacked the natural resources to increase its economy, it had launched an attack on China in the 1930s to expand. After that attack, the United States had placed trade restrictions on Japan.

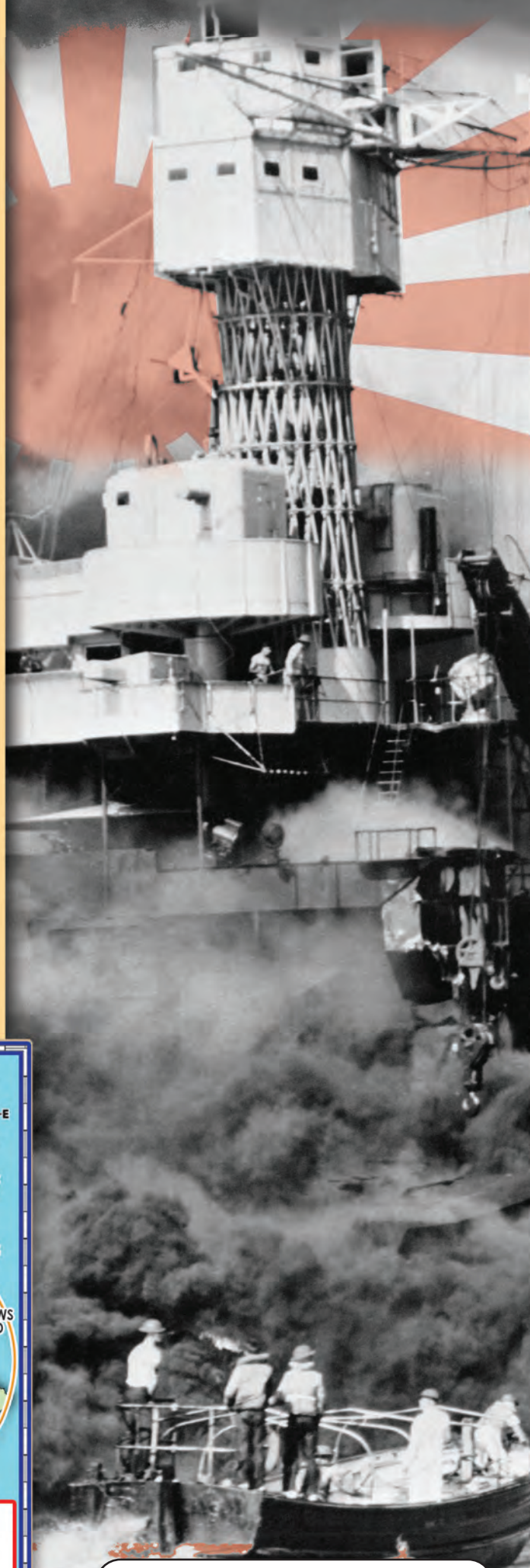
The restrictions were a way to try to peacefully prevent ongoing Japanese expansion. Japan realized that the United States could also be a military threat to their efforts to expand control in the Pacific Ocean. The many small islands in the southwest Pacific Ocean gave Japan

a place to protect their interests and keep foreign military from their country. Japan occupied the Marshall Islands located between the Philippines and Hawaii. Taking the Marshall Islands was an offensive step for the Japanese to try to disable the U.S. military force in Hawaii.

On Monday, Dec. 8, 1941, the day after the attacks, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave one of the most famous speeches in American history. In a joint session of Congress, he called December 7 "a day that will live in infamy." In the speech, Roosevelt officially asked Congress for a declaration of war on Japan.

The power to declare war is assigned to Congress in the U.S. Constitution. The Senate voted 82 to 0 in favor of declaring war. The House voted in favor of declaring war, 388 to 1. This authorized "the President ... to employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States and the resources of the government to carry on war against the Imperial Government of Japan, and, to bring the conflict to a successful termination, all of the resources of the country are hereby pledged by Congress of the United States."

On Dec. 11, 1941, Congress also declared war on the Axis Powers of Germany and Italy in response to Adolf Hitler declaring war on the United States. The Axis Powers had a pact with Japan to be their allies. The United States was now fully involved in the worldwide conflict.



Background image: West Virginia was sunk by six torpedoes and two bombs during the attack.

Major Events of the War

After the United States declared war on the Axis powers, the United States military had to prepare to fight on three separate fronts, or theaters of operation. A "theater of operations" is the military term referring to land and sea areas to be invaded or defended. America would fight in three theaters of operations in the war: the European Theater, the Mediterranean Theater, and the Pacific Theater.

Mediterranean Theater

In 1942, General Dwight Eisenhower was named Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe. Eisenhower and his team of generals studied maps of Europe. The geography would determine the plan for defeating the Axis powers. Every military force needs to have a continual supply of ammunition, transportation, food, and medical supplies. These things would be kept at bases close to the troops.

To free Europe and create bases to supply the military, Eisenhower's team chose to start in Italy. The base for supplies would have to be across the Mediterranean Sea in German-occupied northern Africa. Operation Torch took place in 1942-1943. The Allied Forces gained control of northern Africa in May 1943.

With supply bases in place, the Allied invasion of Italy began in July 1943. Troops landed in Sicily, Italy. The Allies forced the German and Italian troops to evacuate Sicily and move to the

Italian mainland. After losing Sicily to the Allies, the Italians lost confidence in their dictator, Benito Mussolini. It wasn't long before Mussolini was forced out of office. By September 1943, the Allies gained control of Italy.

European Theater

As a result of the Allied invasion of Italy, Nazi Germany was now fighting on three fronts of military conflict. The Allies were in the east, the south and the northwest. This meant their supply bases for the troops were not close to the fighting. U.S. and British airplanes began strategic bombing raids. They targeted German factories, highways, and important industrial cities. Additionally, Soviet troops were battling German forces on the Eastern Front.

On June 6, 1944, American and British troops invaded northern France. With 156,000 Allied troops, this was the largest invasion assembled in history. The troops crossed the English Channel, stormed the beaches of Normandy, France, and caused the German army to retreat. Russia then advanced on Nazi Germany's Eastern Front. The German troops pulled back to protect the German capital of Berlin. In May 1945, Russian, American, and British troops met in Berlin and accepted the surrender of Nazi Germany.

Pacific Theater

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese military captured many islands in the Pacific Ocean. Japanese troops controlled many of these islands during the course of the war, even as far north as the Aleutian Islands west of Alaska. The goal of the Allied powers was to station troops close to the Japanese capital. The Allies could then invade and cause the government to surrender.



Leapfrogging, also known as island hopping, was a strategy where the Allies bypassed certain islands that were heavily defended by the enemy. The Allies instead attacked and seized less-protected islands. This action made it more difficult for the Japanese to move between the islands. Once captured, an island could then be used as a base for supplies and equipment. Gradually, the Allies were making their way to be geographically closer to the Japanese mainland for air assaults.

"Operation Iceberg" was the largest water, land, and air invasion in the Pacific theater. The fighting for Okinawa was the fiercest of the war. Okinawa was the last island needed to put aircraft and ships close to the Japanese homeland. On July 29, 1945, the Allies demanded the surrender of the Japanese government, but they refused.

Texans Respond to War

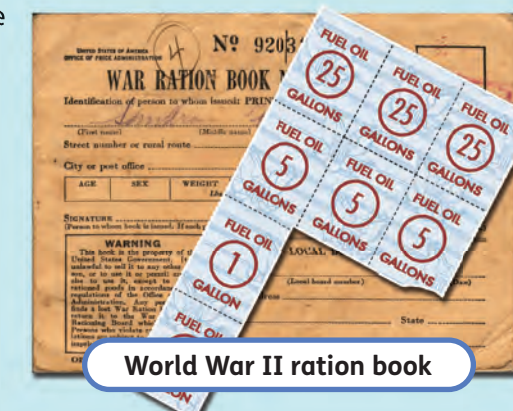
During World War II, many Texans played a role in the war effort. Thousands of Texans served in the military. Many soldiers received training at military bases around Texas. Over one million people trained at 142 military installations in Texas throughout the war. About 100,000 soldiers trained at Fort Hood near Killeen, Texas. They received basic army training and also trained to serve in the U.S. Army tank battalions.

Pilots trained at Avenger Field near Sweetwater, Texas. The most notable group of pilots to train at Avenger Field were the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). The WASP was a civilian organization formed to help test and transport military airplanes. Women who could pilot planes joined to do this critical work. Members of the WASP did more than deliver airplanes to military bases from the factory, however. They towed targets behind their planes in the air for troops to practice with live anti-aircraft guns. They also transported cargo across the country and across the oceans.

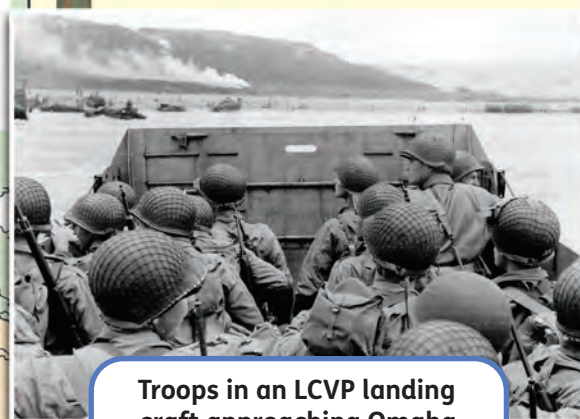
Texans helped at home by rationing, buying war bonds, and working in factories. Rationing was a way to control how people got supplies. The government handed out ration books to keep track of what everyone bought and used. Ration books contained removable stamps for certain items like meat, cooking oils, and canned goods. Consumers had to give a stamp with their money to receive the item they wanted. Once the stamp was used, people would have to wait until the next month to receive another stamp for that specific item.

Texans bought war bonds to support the military and government during World War II. War bonds were a way for the government to raise funds for the war by borrowing money from citizens. People could purchase war bonds and exchange them for the money they paid, plus the interest earned on the bond after a certain period of time. The government created elaborate campaigns and slogans to encourage Americans to purchase war bonds.

With many American men off fighting the war, thousands of women took over their jobs, doing work that they had never done before. Women worked in factories making airplanes, ships, ammunition, and other essential supplies for the war. They also did other jobs that had once been reserved for men, like driving trucks, running machinery, and working on assembly lines.



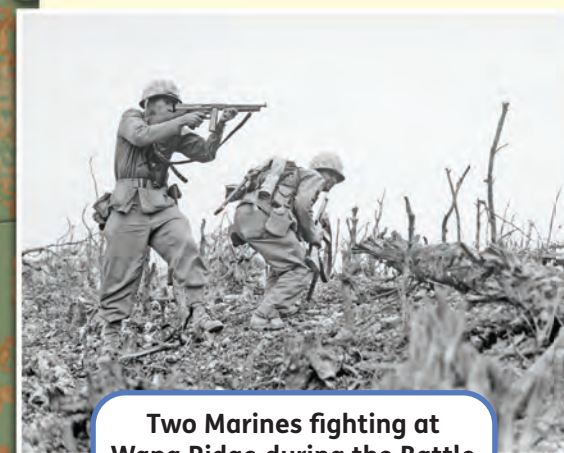
World War II ration book



Troops in an LCV landing craft approaching Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944



General Dwight Eisenhower



Two Marines fighting at Wana Ridge during the Battle of Okinawa, May 1945

An End to the War

On April 12, 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died at his home in Warm Springs, Georgia. The daunting task of bringing World War II to an end fell to Vice President Harry S. Truman. Truman was sworn in as president of the United States and immediately went to work to end the war. With the surrender of Nazi Germany

secured, the Allies turned their attention to the Japanese in the Pacific theater.

Allied leaders tried to convince the Japanese to surrender, but they refused. The U.S. had developed an atomic bomb with more destructive power than 20,000 tons of ordinary explosives. Using the atomic bomb in the war would destroy

many Japanese lives, but Truman also believed that dropping the bomb would force the Japanese to surrender. This could save many more lives in the long run. It was a difficult decision, but he felt it was the only way to end the war quickly.

On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, the city of Hiroshima, Japan was destroyed in the first atomic blast. Still, the Japanese government would not surrender. On August 9, the city of Nagasaki became the second target of an atomic weapon. It was then that the Japanese government asked for terms of surrender. World War II ended when the Japanese surrendered to Allied Forces on Aug. 15, 1945.

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japanese officials boarded the USS Missouri docked in Tokyo Bay to sign the written agreement ending WWII. Japanese foreign minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijirō Umezu signed the terms of surrender, along with U.S. Army General Douglas MacArthur.



Douglas MacArthur signs documents during Japanese surrender ceremonies on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay

Texas Cities Grow as a Result of the War

During the Great Depression, the economy of Texas suffered. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created a plan called the New Deal. It was intended to reduce the negative effects of the Great Depression. The New Deal included many new government programs to help people and states recover from the economic downturn. Texas was already starting to recover when World War II started.

World War II increased the demand for oil and gas, steel, lumber, and other products created in Texas factories.

Texas shipyards bustled with activity, building ships and shipping supplies to troops around the world. Businesses hired thousands of employees to meet the demands of the war. Hundreds of laborers immigrated from Mexico to work on farms in Texas and produce crops for the war effort. During the war, millions of people moved to Texas for new economic opportunities.

During the war, military bases in Texas expanded, and new ones opened. These military bases boosted local economies

and aided the war effort. More military bases meant more trained soldiers for the war. The bases also meant more jobs for Texas citizens. This created stable incomes for many civilian and military employees.

All of this activity in Texas during World War II helped the state economy recover from the devastation of the Great Depression. Many of the changes in agriculture, industry, and the military paved the way for developments in the state after the war. Cities across the state grew as a result of the wartime activities.

Texas City Populations:

	1930	1940	1950
Corpus Christi	27,741	57,301	108,287
Dallas	260,475	294,734	434,462
Fort Worth	163,447	177,662	278,778
Galveston	64,401	81,173	113,066
Houston	292,352	384,514	596,163

Name _____

Texas Heroes of World War II

Audie Murphy

Audie Leon Murphy was born on June 20, 1924 in Hunt County, Texas. He was a leader from a very young age. He dropped out of school in fifth grade to help care for his 11 siblings. He earned money as a farm laborer picking cotton in the fields of East Texas. In 1942, he joined the army at the height of World War II. After completing basic training, Murphy served in the 3rd Infantry Division in North Africa.

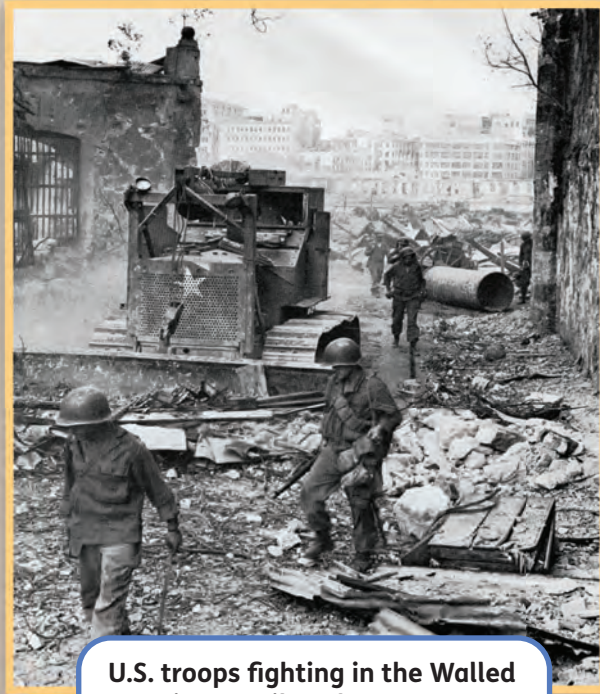
He participated in the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. During his time in Italy, he proved his skill and bravery in battle. In August 1944, Murphy participated in the invasion of southern France. He distinguished himself in battle and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. In January 1945, Murphy single-handedly held off a German advance near the town of Holtzwihr, France, allowing his men to retreat to safety.



Audie Murphy

By the time of his 20th birthday, Murphy became the most decorated soldier to serve in World War II. This means he earned more awards than any other soldier serving during the war. Among his 33 awards, Murphy received the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award. He also received awards from the French and Belgian governments for his bravery.

After his career in the military, Murphy became a movie star in Hollywood. He made 44 movies during his lifetime. Most of them were westerns. He also wrote a book about his life as a soldier. It was made into a very popular movie during the 1950s. Audie Murphy died in a plane crash in 1971. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. To commemorate his life and achievements, Texans celebrate Audie Murphy day each year on June 20th.



U.S. troops fighting in the Walled City, Manila Feb. 27 1945

Cleto Rodríguez

Cleto Luna Rodríguez was born in San Marcos, Texas, in 1923. His parents died when he was nine years old, and he went to live with relatives in San Antonio. Even at a young age, he worked hard to help his family while still going to school. Rodríguez enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1944. He trained as a rifleman and soon joined the 148th Infantry, which was fighting in the Pacific theater.

Rodríguez spent much of the war fighting in the Philippines. During the Battle of Manila, Rodríguez and a fellow soldier fought off 82 enemy soldiers all by themselves. This made it possible for the United States to defeat the Japanese Army in the Philippines. For his bravery, Rodríguez earned the Medal of Honor. He was one of only 14 men from Texas to earn this distinction. The Medal of Honor is given to members of the Armed Forces who risk their lives "above and beyond the call of duty" while fighting U.S. enemies.



U.S. Army Medal of Honor

When World War II ended, Rodríguez returned to his family home in San Antonio. He continued to serve in the U.S. military, and retired from service in 1970. Following his retirement, he became an advocate for the welfare of military veterans and supported equal rights initiatives for Latin American citizens. Rodríguez died in 1990, but his memory lives on in Texas.



Cleto Rodríguez



British soldiers chat with an American paratrooper in Avola, Sicily, July 11, 1943.